DEVELOPING A DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Situation Assessment

Prepared by: The Zethof Consulting Group Inc.
April 30, 2003

BRITISH COLUMBIA

A Message from the Honourable George Abbott

The wealth of knowledge and information that public libraries provide has enduring value for people of all ages and backgrounds. The Government of British Columbia is committed to protecting and supporting public libraries because a strong and vibrant public library system strengthens our communities. To this end, the Government recently announced additional per capita funding support for public libraries in the heartland.

To more effectively focus the Government's efforts in the development and support of the public library system, the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, as part of its three-year service plan, has embarked on a consultative process to develop a strategic plan for public libraries. This process, which will focus on the partnerships that together strengthen our libraries, will conclude with the approval and adoption of a provincial strategic plan for public libraries in 2004/05.

This Situation Assessment document is an important step in the consultation process. Its purpose is to canvas the views of stakeholders with respect to the challenges and opportunities facing public libraries now and into the future. Stakeholders include library boards, local government, and other organizations as well as individuals having a special interest in public libraries. Your responses to this consultation paper will assist in the creation of a draft strategic plan for further stakeholder consultation this summer.

Thank you for your participation. Your input will help the Government of British Columbia determine a course of action for public libraries.

Sincerely,

George Abbott

George Abbott
Minister of Community, Aboriginal
and Women's Services

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide a strategic assessment of the situation facing public libraries in British Columbia ("BC") today and to pose questions designed to elicit input from stakeholders, including library boards, the library profession and local governments, that will help in the development of a draft strategic plan for public libraries for the Province of British Columbia. It is based on the results of an interview survey of over 50 stakeholders and presents key issues, challenges, and needs of public libraries.

The Public Library Services Branch of the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services contracted with The Zethof Consulting Group Inc. ("the consultant") to develop the draft strategic plan.

The reader is invited to provide feedback for the strategic plan using the contact information in the last section of this report.

1.1 The Importance of Public Libraries in British Columbia

"Libraries serve as the living room of the community" (Ron Clancy, Chief Librarian, New Westminster Public Library)

Public library use, as measured by items circulated, continues to outpace population growth. The following chart shows how public library use has grown over the past 50 years.

Public Library Use in BC

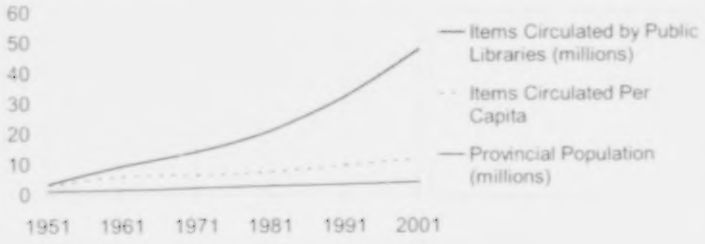

Figure 1

Since the introduction of the first public library legislation in 1891, the public library system has grown to 70 library boards serving over 98 percent[1] of the population. Ten of these boards account for almost 80% of the total population served by public libraries, as the following pie chart illustrates:

[1] By comparison, Alberta serves 96.3 percent of its population and Ontario serves 96.2 percent.

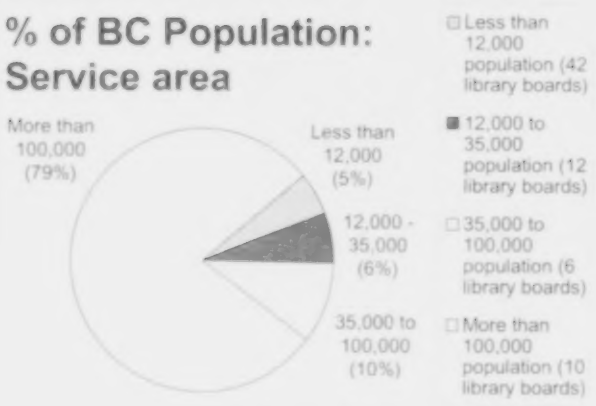
% of BC Population: Service area
More than 100,000 (79%)
Less than 12,000 (5%)
12,000 - 35,000 (6%)
35,000 to 100,000 (10%)
Less than 12,000 population (42 library boards)
12,000 to 35,000 population (12 library boards)
35,000 to 100,000 population (6 library boards)
More than 100,000 population (10 library boards)

Figure 2

British Columbia's public library system has 230 service outlets and employs over 3,000 full and part-time staff, of which over 440 are professional librarians. Circulation of library materials for home use is approaching 50 million items annually and library collections now exceed a total of 10 million volumes.

Public libraries help promote the economic well being of the communities they serve by providing information resources, programs, and services to its citizens. An informed and literate public is of key importance to BC's economic health. It has been stated that public libraries are in the "community development business"[2] and this can be demonstrated by the roles that libraries take in:

- Supporting a democratic society by providing customers with free access to information regardless of race, class, income, age, gender or religion to improve the quality of citizens' lives;
- Supporting and promoting literacy and lifelong learning through collaboration and participation with academic institutions and literacy organizations;
- Supporting the local culture through collaboration and participation with the community's publishers, arts organizations, museums and other cultural organizations;
- Supporting children and students by providing a wide range of resources and pre-school programs; and,
- Supporting the local economy by assisting local businesses with information resources, providing high-skill jobs, and improving the market worth of the community.[3]

[2] Ken Haycock, Professor, School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, interview April 9, 2003.
[3] Leslie Fitch and Jody Warner. Dividends: the value of public libraries in Canada, prepared for The Library Action Committee of the Book and Periodical Council. Toronto, ON: Book and Periodical Council, 1997.

1.2 The Province of British Columbia's Role in the Public Library System

The provincial government has jurisdictional responsibility for public libraries. It is responsible for *The Library Act*, which provides for the governance of public libraries. The Public Library Services Branch ("the Branch") administers the Act and provides leadership and support services for the development of the public library system.

Branch programs and services include:

- Administration of $9 million in annual per capita operating grants;
- Supporting the provincial interlibrary loan network including the OutLook Online provincial union catalogue of public and academic library holdings;
- Providing advice and information to library boards and staff;
- Maintaining and delivering a basic training program for library staff in smaller communities;
- Administering a provincially-funded youth employment program to facilitate Internet use in public libraries;
- Representing the interests of public libraries at the national level;
- Negotiating volume discounts for electronic databases; and,
- Administering a variety of other grant and support programs for public libraries and provincial library associations.

The impact of Branch programs can be seen in a number of areas:

- Provision of funding for the development and maintenance of the OutLook provincial union database of public library holdings has led to a threefold increase in interlibrary lending over the past decade to almost 90,000 items per year;
- Since 1996, through special grant programs and partnerships with Industry Canada and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, public libraries now offer access to the Internet on more than 1,400 public terminals in virtually all library outlets;
- In the Lower Mainland, provincial funding for InterLINK's reciprocal service agreements with public libraries ensures that the almost two and half million residents of the region enjoy free and open access to more than 70 library outlets; and,
- The Community Library Training Program, a web-based distance-learning program that provides basic courses in public library work, has enhanced the knowledge and skills of hundreds of public library workers for more than a decade.

1.3 The Strategic Planning Process

The development of the draft strategic plan for public libraries commenced with a review of strategic planning initiatives in other jurisdictions and stakeholder interviews to identify public library issues, opportunities, trends, needs and priorities. A list of the people interviewed is provided in the appendix. The result

of this initial data gathering is this Situation Assessment for stakeholder and public feedback. Subsequent milestones in the process are as follows:

- May 31, 2003 – workshop at the BC Library Association Conference at Harrison Hot Springs to review and discuss the Situation Assessment and explore strategic directions.
- Mid-summer 2003 – publication of a draft strategic plan for stakeholder and public feedback.
- November 2003 – preparation of a report incorporating the draft strategic plan for the Honourable George Abbott, Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services.

Stakeholders can provide feedback throughout the process up to September 30, 2003, at which time all input received will be reviewed and considered.

1.4 Survey Method

This situation assessment is based on interviews with selected public library stakeholders and staff of the Public Library Services Branch during March and April 2003. The interviews were conducted either in person or by telephone and they were approximately one hour long on average. The Public Library Services Branch selected the stakeholders to be interviewed. A list of the people interviewed is provided in Appendix A. This paper presents a synthesis of the key issues raised during the interviews.

Libraries provide an unthreatening environment for self-motivated learning.

Libraries are one of the few places where young and old, school children, college students and adult learners can all participate in learning.

Libraries allow informal, individual learning, clubs and communities for learning, as well as providing a range of short evening and daytime courses.

Libraries are "learning start-up" organizations.

Libraries provide the foundations for a learning culture.

("Framework for the Future: Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade." Department for Culture, Media and Sport, London, England, February 2003)

2. THE CURRENT SITUATION

The current situation faced by public libraries in British Columbia, as outlined here, has been considered from the perspectives listed below. Selected data about other provincial, national and international public library systems are presented for purposes of comparison. At the end of each section, a series of questions are posed to encourage thinking and discussion about the future role of the provincial government in the public library system. The perspectives are:

- Market Trends;
- Operations, Processes and Technology;
- Staffing;
- Governance, Leadership, and Legislation; and,
- Financial Model.

2.1 MARKET TRENDS

The role of public libraries is shaped by the local community's needs. In British Columbia, as elsewhere, public libraries are adjusting their programs and services, recognizing that people's life styles, information needs, and service expectations are diverse and changing. At the same time, there are more public library user groups with unique or special needs.

2.1.1 Higher Expectations for Service

Contemporary life styles, commercial service standards, and new technologies have a major influence on what people want from libraries, how they wish to use libraries, and the level of service they expect from libraries:

- Convenient operating hours with ability to access library services by computer from home, work or school.
- Fast service.
- Availability of current/up-to-date books and information including more computers to access the Internet.
- Convenient library branch locations with ability to borrow at one branch and drop off at another branch, regardless of jurisdiction.
- Assistance to interpret and critically evaluate information.
- Consistent service standards within and between communities.
- A safe, comfortable, and inviting atmosphere.

In London, England, an audit found that the design of library services was responsive to customer demands because libraries realize that their customers, regardless of age, use their services out of choice.[4]

[4] Building Better Library Services. London, U.K.: Audit Commission, 2002.

2.1.2 Changing Patterns of Use

Technological developments have been used to improve services in libraries with a trend to more customer-centered innovations like self-check-out services, automated security gates, virtual reference libraries, "smart cards" (a single card that functions as student, library, and debit card).
(Ken Haycock and Helen Moore - "Trends in Library and Information Service in Canada: 1994-1999")

The traditional patterns of how and when people use libraries based on their stage of life and age is changing. In particular, people in the 18 to 30 year-old age cohort access information differently from their parents and grandparents. These users, who tend to be more computer literate, may not think of the library first when accessing information. They are more likely to use the Internet as a primary information source. The ways in which they access information and use (or don't use) libraries have implications for promotion and design of library services in the future, as these users grow older.

The prevalence of home computer use by children is an indication of how children will access information in the future. For example, a study in Ontario found that 75% of children aged 9-14 have computers at home and two out of three of them have access to the Internet. In addition, two out of three 6-8 year-olds also have computers at home with access to the Internet.[5]

Even as the use of computers at home is growing, other emerging trends have been identified: school-age children are becoming more reliant on their local public library as a place to research school assignments and to do homework. Also, as the baby boomers move into retirement, they can be expected to access library services in increasing numbers.

2.1.3 User Groups with Special Needs

Public libraries serve a number of disparate groups with special needs and requirements. Their participation requires specialized facilities, staff assistance, library materials, or services, all of which can increase operating costs.

The following needs were among those identified through the interviews:

- There is a need to meet increasing multicultural and English as a Second Language (ESL) demands for foreign language materials, settlement information, societal integration, news from home, and quality English literacy material. This appears to be especially prevalent in the larger urban centers in the Lower Mainland.[6] [7]

[5] *"Building Value Together – A Vision for change for Ontario Public Libraries (The Discussion Paper)"* Prepared by the Ontario Public Libraries Strategic Directions Council, December 11, 2001.
[6] Burnaby Public Library reports that less than half of Burnaby residents have English as their mother tongue and their number is declining. Loans of non-English language books have increased 98.6% for adult materials and 114.3% for children's materials over one year.
[7] The Vancouver Public Library identifies its five most common client groups (from highest to lowest focus/usage) as: (1) immigrants/new Canadians/ESL/multilingual, (2) children and families, (3) seniors, (4) students, and (5) teens.

- People living in remote areas or without access to personal transportation to physically access library services need options for accessing library services online or by mail.
- Aboriginal people, including those living on and off reserves, may require library staff who are culturally attuned to their interests and information needs.
- There is a requirement to provide adaptive technologies for access to library services for people with visual, auditory, motor and other disabilities.

"You can't change the perceptions of the library without effective communication. In order to communicate, you must establish relationships..." (Sue Sutherland: "Passion, Practice, Partnership and Politics: Marketing the Future of Public Libraries" Aplis 15(2) June 2002)

2.1.4 The Changing Role of Public Libraries

As society changes, communities expect their public libraries to adopt new roles. Some of these roles include:

- Providing technology training and access to electronic information and the Internet.
- Working with school libraries and teachers – in some areas, students have become more reliant on public library services.
- Providing assistance accessing government information, as governments shift information and services to the Internet.
- Providing centers for lifelong learning[8], an emerging societal norm.

2.1.5 Promoting the Public Library to the Public

Public libraries wish to learn how to better promote themselves to reach a wider audience and change misconceptions about what libraries have to offer (e.g., that libraries are "irrelevant," they are just "book barns").[9] A challenge in this regard is finding effective and economic methods of advertising and promoting public libraries across the province.

Market Trends – Questions:

1. *What role should the public library serve in its community?*
2. *Are there legislative barriers that reduce libraries' capacity to adapt to their changing environment? How can the legislation and governance of libraries be changed to address these changing conditions?*
3. *Are there strategic program changes that the province can make that would help libraries address changing market trends?*

[8] "Lifelong learning will not only be necessary but will become more important than a first degree…the implications for public libraries are potentially profound. They could become centers for self-instruction and lifelong learning for all levels of society, from the specialized graduate who wants to update him/herself to the technician who wants to learn new skills, and the manual worker who wants to improve him/herself. This has always been a function of the public library, but never, until now, has there been such an opportunity to fulfill it." "The Public Library in the Future." *Library Trends*, Summer 97, Vol. 46 Issue 1, p.68.

[9] In 2000, 47% of BC's population had a library card. In comparison, Alberta reported 37% ("Library Statistics – Alberta Community Development) and Ontario had a 44% rate ("Ontario Public Library Statistics").

2.2 OPERATIONS, PROCESSES AND TECHNOLOGY

There are opportunities to enhance customer service and reduce costs through cooperation between public libraries and other library and non-library organizations, as well as by increasing operating efficiencies.

2.2.1 Enhancing Library Cooperation

Examples of successful partnerships: The Toronto Public Library has a sponsorship with Disney for its summer reading program. It has also partnered with Atomic Energy of Canada to launch "ScienceNet," a website that provides reputable and accurate Internet information in the pure and applied sciences. (Ken Haycock and Helen Moore - "Trends in Library and Information Service in Canada: 1994-1999")

BC public libraries are working together, at both the regional and provincial levels, to increase custome: value and operating efficiencies. A variety of models and mechanisms have emerged in support of cooperation, e.g., a regional library federation in the Lower Mainland, a provincial union database of library holdings to support interlibrary loans, and regional reciprocal service agreements.

Through cooperative initiatives, BC public libraries are creating a more integrated library service across the province, a path they wish to continue following. An example is the InterLINK Federated Public Library System, which intends to introduce a single library card for its seventeen member library boards in the Lower Mainland. There may also be additional opportunities for working cooperatively with other types of libraries in the community.

Public library stakeholders have identified a number of needs for enhancing library cooperation:

- Leadership for developing visions, plans, guidelines, procedures, and best practices.
- Technology infrastructure, in particular, high speed Internet service (i.e., broadband) for public libraries in remote areas, and sustainability funding.
- Appropriate statutory authority and financial incentives to enable and encourage meaningful participation in cooperative ventures and partnerships.

2.2.2 Increasing Operational Efficiencies

A number of libraries have found ways to free up resources for enhancing customer service by applying technologies and new processes. For example, many public libraries have introduced self-help checkouts, which enabled the library to re-deploy staff to other priorities, such as assisting users to find and interpret information.

Another opportunity for cost savings is eliminating duplication between the public library service and other government-funded education and public information programs. For example, there may be opportunities for public libraries and other public sector organizations to work together in the licensing of commercial online database subscriptions, thereby

receiving more favourable purchase terms and creating more uniform service levels across the province.

Another cost-saving opportunity that public libraries could explore is sharing administrative functions (e.g., human resources, finance, information technology services, technical support services, legal services, building planning) with other libraries, local governments, or other organizations with an interest. A proactive approach is more likely to result in solutions that maintain a library's autonomy and flexibility.

Operations, Processes and Technology – Questions:

4. *What are the barriers that reduce public libraries' capacity to cooperate with one another and with other types of libraries?*
5. *How can the provincial government encourage and assist public library cooperation?*
6. *What strategic program changes can the province make to help libraries adapt to changing information and communications technologies?*

2.3 STAFFING

Two key staffing issues are the need for skill upgrading so staff can remain current with evolving technologies and practices, and the aging of the library workforce.

2.3.1 New Skills to Meet User Demands

Librarians are finding that new skills are required to keep pace with the changing role of libraries. Chief Librarians, like CEOs of any organization, need well-developed skills in management, marketing, customer service, and staff development if they are to effectively meet the community's expectations. Library staff working in technical areas, both in rural and urban areas, need access to training opportunities.

2.3.2 Aging Workforce

Unless remedial action is taken, there will be a shortage of qualified staff in public libraries in the next decade. Public libraries face the imminent retirement of about 85 percent of the library workforce.[10] As an example

[10] "Work Futures: British Columbia Occupational Outlooks, 2000 Edition" reports that Librarian positions are projected to account for 85% of projected employment openings (in the Librarians, Archivists, Conservators, Curators occupational group) in 2008. The employment opportunity for librarians is based on 210 new job opportunities and 700 vacancies from retirements. With regard to Library Technicians, 70 new openings are projected in this time period, with two-thirds of these openings resulting from retiring workers.

"Forming alliances across all types of libraries and with other organizations gives libraries a technological and competitive edge." (Above quoted in "Internal Analysis: A Report on Trends in Library Operations and Services" prepared by ASM Advanced Strategic Management Consultants)

of this situation, the Nelson Municipal Library is poised to lose over 60 percent of its staff to retirement in the next 12 years.

At the same time, new graduates from programs such as the Masters in Library and Information Science from the University of British Columbia have attractive career options besides public library service.[11] Moreover, the lower than average wages for entry-level Library Technicians deters potentially good workers from entering the public library service.[12] Wages and salaries for Library Technicians are lower for this occupation than for other occupations.[13]

Few co-operative programs exist to encourage younger people to consider a career in the public library service. And where they exist, some libraries cannot afford to pay co-op workers the minimum wages as set out in union agreements.

Staffing – Questions:

7. *What are the critical barriers that reduce libraries' ability to recruit and retain qualified staff?*
8. *Are there strategic program changes that the provincial government can make that would assist libraries in addressing these staffing challenges?*

[11] "Work Futures: British Columbia Occupational Outlooks, 2000 Edition" reports that the majority of Librarians (68%) and Library Technicians (59%) work in the education sector.
[12] "Work Futures: British Columbia Occupational Outlooks, 2000 Edition" reports graduates entry-level earnings for full-time library and archive technicians and assistants as $1,570 a month. However, the average weekly hours for these workers were 25 hours. This suggests that many new entrants to the field are not able to find full-time work.
[13] "Work Futures: British Columbia Occupational Outlooks, 2000 Edition" reports that average earnings for Librarian Technicians group is $18,400 compared to average earnings for all other occupations at $27,900.

2.4 GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND LEGISLATION

British Columbia has four kinds of public libraries: municipal libraries; regional library districts; integrated public library systems (Cariboo and Thompson-Nicola regional districts); and public library associations. Definitions for the four types of public library are contained in Appendix B. This mix of governance structures has evolved over the past century and is supported by the *Library Act*.

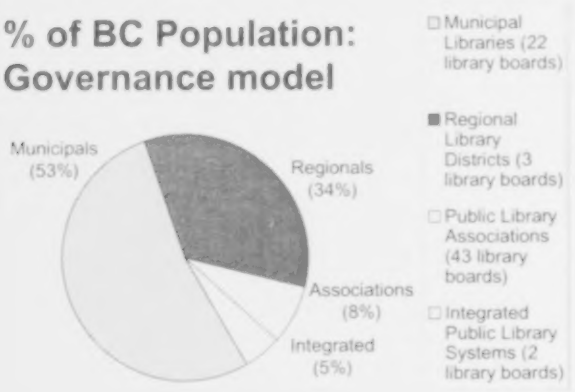
% of BC Population: Governance model
Municipals (53%)
Regionals (34%)
Associations (8%)
Integrated (5%)
Municipal Libraries (22 library boards)
Regional Library Districts (3 library boards)
Public Library Associations (43 library boards)
Integrated Public Library Systems (2 library boards)

Figure 3

For the most part, this governance approach has worked well for British Columbians. The question is whether the governance models employed historically and the options available under the *Library Act* are supportive of a public library service for this century. As well, are opportunities being lost by not using a different governance framework?

2.4.1 Improving the Existing Governance Framework

Given the variety of public library models in the province, there is significant variability in public library accountability and linkage to local governments, which are the primary funders of public library service. Some types of library boards consist of private citizens, whereas other boards consist of elected officials, a difference that has implications for how a Board responds to community needs.

The *Library Act* establishes the governance of public libraries. A general observation is that the Act is inconsistent: In some parts, it is prescriptive (e.g., regional library districts), whereas in other parts, it is enabling (e.g., existing integrated library systems of regional districts). Views have been expressed, both for and against, about a number of specific clauses in the *Library Act*.

Since the *Library Act* was last rewritten in 1994, local government legislation has undergone significant changes. For example, new tools

were introduced regarding dispute resolutions that might be useful for regional library districts.

2.4.2 Providing Governance Options for Communities Served by Public Associations

One example of a successful partnership involving public libraries is "Smart Communities" under the Smart Choices Community Network. The public libraries of Port Moody and Coquitlam are participants.

Public library associations tend to operate libraries in small communities and often have low levels of funding relative to other types of public libraries. While they face the same pressures for providing quality library service as regional or large urban libraries, they lack the benefits of economies of scale of those larger units of service.

Like all public libraries, public library associations get the majority of their funding from local government, yet they are independent bodies and local government has no legal obligation to finance them. These conditions led to uncertainty about the long-term financial sustainability and accountability of public library associations and in 1994 the *Library Act* was revised to no longer permit their establishment although it permitted existing public library associations to continue. Although many public library associations are providing good basic library service, fixed costs and user expectations for public libraries everywhere are rising, often as a result of the introduction of technological innovations. For the public library associations that continue in operation today, maintaining financial viability will be a constant challenge.

Consideration should be given to amendment of the *Library Act* to further ease the transition for public library associations to library governance models more closely aligned with local government, should the public library board and the local government wish to do so.

2.4.3 Achieving Community Satisfaction within a Regional Library

When the *Library Act* was last revised in 1994, it provided only one choice for those wishing to establish a regional library service: the regional library district. The regional library district was introduced in the 1930s with the establishment of the Fraser Valley, Okanagan and Vancouver Island regional libraries. Although library district legislation has been on the books for over 70 years, no other regional library districts have been created. The three established regional library districts provide effective library service for one in every three British Columbians. They can continue to do so as long as the legislation under which they operate provides the necessary tools for operating a wide-area regional library service while meeting the needs and aspirations of their many participating municipalities and regional districts.

Except for the Cariboo and Thomson-Nicola Regional Districts, the *Library Act* does not provide regional districts with the authority to establish and operate a public library. With the continuing modernization

of local government legislation and the evolution of regional districts as regional service providers over the past four decades, consideration should be given to further amendments to the *Library Act*. A new model of public library governance, under the authority of a regional district, would offer a new option for establishment of a regional library service for all or part of a regional district.

2.4.4 Library Board Accountability and Performance

Currently, library boards may be composed entirely of local government elected officials, or a combination of citizen appointees and one or more local government elected officials, depending on the type of library.

The stakeholder survey found that the extent to which library boards utilize performance management practices with a focus on community outcomes varies among public libraries. For all library board members, access to training opportunities is necessary to ensure their accountability and effectiveness.

Currently, the Public Library Services Branch and the British Columbia Library Trustees Association, representing library boards, currently share the responsibility for training library board members. Consideration should be given to further enhancing the training opportunities available to library board members.

Governance, Leadership and Legislation – Question:

9. *What are the key principles that should be embodied in library legislation? Are they being addressed in the Library Act? If not, how can the legislation be changed to embody these key principles?*

2.5 FINANCIAL MODEL[14]

Expenditure by library boards on provision of public library service is approaching $150 million annually. Increasing costs to meet user demands are squeezing the budgets of public libraries, especially in small communities. In response, library boards have found some innovative ways to overcome budget shortfalls and meet service expectations, but more needs to be done to generate funds, manage costs, and maintain financial viability.

Some of the issues relating to financial model viability are outlined in the paragraphs below.

2.5.1 Increasing and New Operating Costs

Public libraries have to deal with a significant increase in a range of general operating costs, as well as with the emergence of new cost centres. Higher utility and staffing costs (i.e., wages, benefits, and number of staff) are driving up general operating costs. The costs of books and other paper-based products, impacted in part by a weak Canadian dollar, are rising as well. New cost centres like those listed below are putting additional pressure on public library budgets:

- Acquiring and supporting new media collections, e.g., online subscriptions, CDs, DVDs, and other electronic formats.
- Need for frequent technology purchases and upgrades for the library operating system and training for staff and public users.
- Providing access to library collections and services for people with visual, motor and other disabilities (adaptive technologies).
- Providing remote access to library holdings and digital information, and maintaining library web sites.

Significant staff time is being devoted to emerging service areas, for example, providing services for a growing multicultural population (e.g., finding, buying, and cataloguing foreign language materials), and helping people to find government program information on the Internet and to fill out government forms.

2.5.2 Need for New Library Buildings

A number of communities, especially in the Lower Mainland, are growing rapidly and need new library facilities to maintain satisfactory service levels. New library buildings require a significant capital investment and as they are often larger than the buildings they replace, they also need an increased operating budget.

[14] A financial model articulates how the organization generates revenues, incurs costs, and maintains financial viability.

In smaller communities, existing library space may be in need of replacement, but borrowing bylaws for construction of new library buildings do not always receive voter approval.

2.5.3 Need for Renovations of Existing Buildings

Many public library buildings are old and not wired for new technologies, and they do not have adequate space for computer workstations and expanding collections. To meet the community's service expectations, many libraries face significant costs to upgrade and expand their buildings.

2.5.4 Small and Declining Tax Base in Rural Areas

Communities outside of the urbanized Lower Mainland and Lower Vancouver Island have a relatively small tax base, which has been declining in recent years as local industries have closed or declined, and people have moved away. The loss of business and residential tax bases is impairing the ability of local governments to fund public libraries and other community services.

2.5.5 Open Access

Many of Canada's public libraries (including BC) have been able to improve their public Internet services due to a partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

A strongly held public library value is that public library collections should be in the "commons", basic services should be accessible to everyone in the area served by the library without payment of a user fee, and government funding generated from taxes should cover most of the cost of providing the library service.

This value is reinforced by the *Library Act*, which prescribes that certain "core services," including access to public library materials, must be "free of charge" and the Act lists the items for which a charge must not be imposed. Beyond the core services mandated as free of charge, the library board may determine appropriate additional services and user fees. This approach could be further clarified through legislation or recommended best practices.

2.5.6 Government Funding

Local government grants and contributions account for over 80% of library board revenue. The following pie charts summarize public library revenue (and expenditure) for 2001.

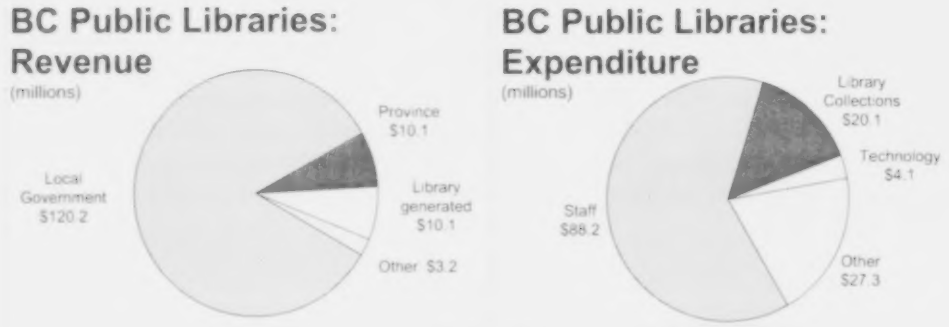

Figure 4

In addition to basic operating funding for staff, collections and other library board operating overheads, local governments typically provide library buildings or participate in the cost of providing library buildings.

The ability of local governments to finance services such as public libraries varies widely, however. On a per capita basis, expenditure by library boards ranges from less than $15 to more than $45 per capita, as seen below:

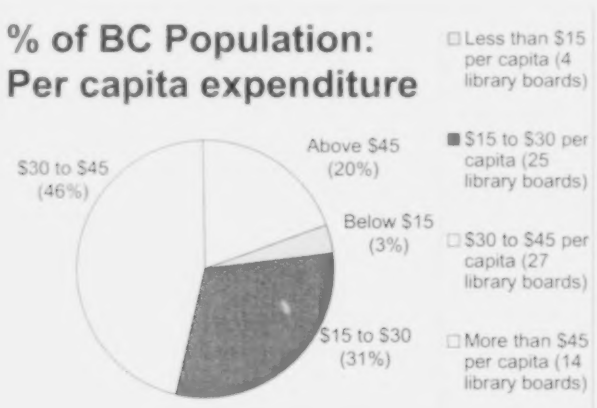

Figure 5

The relative strength and growth of their local governments' property tax base explains why many of the large urban libraries in the Lower Mainland are near the top in Canada in terms of local government support. In other regions, particularly in smaller communities, there is not the same ability to pay for public library service, and service levels vary accordingly.

The provincial government's per capita operating grant program for public libraries uses grant rates that favour libraries in smaller communities and regional libraries providing service to rural areas. In 2003/04, per capita grant rates were raised by $0.20 per capita to offset the impact of

population decline in many areas of the province. For some libraries, this was the first per capita rate increase in over a decade.

Over the past twenty years, local government has emerged to play a dominant and pivotal role in financing public library service, both in terms of operating and capital expenditures. Provincial per capita operating funding for libraries, while valued for the measure of relief provided to local taxpayers, particularly in smaller communities, is unconditional funding and in this respect is no different than the funding provided by local government.

There is an opportunity to consider how local and provincial government funding for public libraries ought to complement each other and reflect the respective strategic priorities of the two levels of government. For example, a municipal council would expect to pay for a public library service to a level that meets the needs and expectations of the residents of the municipality. The provincial government may have additional expectations of the public library, for example, the subsidization of services, such as interlibrary loan, that can provide benefits to persons beyond the municipal boundaries. The provincial government could consider the use of performance-based funding to encourage public libraries to meet broader provincial goals, thereby augmenting the established and important role that unconditional provincial funding currently plays in supporting provision of basic library services.

2.5.7 The Last Two Percent

Over 98% of British Columbia's people are provided with public library service as a consequence of local government participation in the financing of library boards. The remaining 2%, however, including many aboriginal people living on Reserves, are without a public library service due to financial and other barriers to the establishment of public library service in remote areas and on Reserves.

Financial Model – Questions:

10. *What are the key financial challenges faced by public libraries?*
11. *Are there strategic program shifts that the provincial government can make to help address these challenges?*
12. *What changes can be made to provincial legislation that would provide more flexibility for library boards to generate revenue while preserving free public access to library services?*

3. CONTACT FOR FEEDBACK

We welcome your response to this document. To ensure that your comments are received in time to be considered in the development of the draft strategic plan to be published this summer, please send us your written comments by July 31, 2003.

You may provide your feedback through any of the following:

Email:	**plplan@gems9.gov.bc.ca**
Fax:	**250-953-3225**
Post:	**Public Library Strategic Plan Consultation** **P.O. Box 9490 Stn. Prov. Govt.** **Victoria, BC V8W 9N7**
Website:	**Use the response form provided at:** **www.mcaws.gov.bc.ca/lgd/public_libraries/plplan**

For the latest information on the draft strategic plan consultation, please monitor the Public Library Strategic Plan Consultation website at:

www.mcaws.gov.bc.ca/lgd/public_libraries/plplan/

Thank you for participating in the development of British Columbia's strategic plan for public libraries.

APPENDIX A – INTERVIEWEES

Contact Name	Contact Position (Title)	Contact Organization
Punch Jackson	Director	Alberta Libraries
Stan Skrzeszewski	President	ASM Advanced Strategic Management Consultants
Margaret Reynolds	Executive Director	Association of BC Book Publishers
Mike Boehm	Director at Large	British Columbia Chamber of Commerce
Gene Joseph	Library Consultant, First Nations Interest Group	British Columbia Library Association
Nancy Hannum	Chair, First Nations Interest Group	British Columbia Library Association
Paul Whitney	Chief Librarian	Burnaby Public Library
Karin Paul	President	Canadian School Library Association
Colleen Swift	Chief Librarian (Director of Libraries)	Cariboo Regional District Library
Mary Sjorstrom	Regional District Director	Cariboo Regional District Library
Floyd Mailhot	Executive Director	Chief Information Office
Karen Harrison	Chief Librarian (Library Director)	Coquitlam Public Library
Pat Adams	Chief Librarian	Cranbrook Public Library
Gina Rawson	Chief Librarian	Creston Public Library
Wendy West	District Librarian	Curriculum Resource Center - Nelson
Carol Westmacott	Librarian, L.V. Rogers High School	Curriculum Resource Center - Nelson
Anita Cocchia	Manager	Electronic Library Network
Nola Newman	Chief Librarian	Fort Nelson Public Library
Jean Dirksen	Chief Librarian (Chief Administrative Officer)	Fraser Valley Regional Library
Sandra Anderson	Chief Librarian (Chief Executive Officer)	Greater Victoria Public Library
John Barton	Library Board Chair	Greater Victoria Public Library
Patrick Murphy	Library Board Committee Chair	Greater Victoria Public Library
Ken Haycock	President	Haycock & Associates
Eve Hope	Chief Librarian	Hazelton District Public Library
Janet Marren	Chief Librarian	Houston Public Library
Sheila Pfeifer	Chief Librarian	Lillooet Area Public Library
June Melhuish	Library Board Chair	Lillooet Area Public Library
Linda Mitchell	Executive Director	Literacy BC
Wendy Olinger	Chief Librarian	Midway Public Library
Rick Withers	Manager, Resource Standards Branch	Ministry of Education
Deb Thomas	Chief Librarian	Nelson Municipal Library
Ron Clancy	Chief Librarian	New Westminster Public Library
Noreen Ballantyne	Chief Librarian	North Vancouver District Public Library
Sally Gibson	Library Board Member	North Vancouver District Public Library
Lesley Dieno	Chief Librarian (Executive Director)	Okanagan Regional Library
Diana Guinn	Chief Librarian	Port Moody Public Library
Edel Toner-Rogala	Chief Librarian	Prince George Public Library
Barbara Greeniaus	Previous Director	Public Library Services Branch
Greg Buss	Chief Librarian	Richmond Public Library

Contact Name	Contact Position (Title)	Contact Organization
Iris Loewen	Chief Librarian	Sechelt Public Library
Gary Foxall	Library Board Chair	Sechelt Public Library
Jenne Martin	Teacher	St. James Douglas Elementary School
Beth Barlow	Chief Librarian	Surrey Public Library
Mike Reddington	Library Board Member	Surrey Public Library
Alex Danzer	Library Board Chair	Surrey Public Library
Maria Fuccenecco	Analyst, Telecommunications	Ministry of Management Services
Galen Greer	Senior Analyst, Telecommunications	Ministry of Management Services
Ed Curell	Chief Librarian	Terrace Public Library
Kevin Kierans	Chief Librarian (Director of Libraries)	Thompson-Nicola Regional Library District
Catherine Quinlan	University Librarian	University of British Columbia – Irving K. Barber Learning Centre
Ann Curry	Associate Professor	University of British Columbia – School of Library, Archival and Information Studies
Penny Grant	Chief Librarian (Executive Director)	Vancouver Island Regional Library
Eric Smith	Acting Chief Librarian (Acting Library Director)	Vancouver Public Library
Joan Anderson	Library Board Chair	Vancouver Public Library
Brian Campbell	Director, Information Technology	Vancouver Public Library
Gerry Collver	Director, Strategic Planning and Change	Vancouver Public Library
Joan Richoz	Chief Librarian (Library Director)	Whistler Public Library

APPENDIX B – PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Integrated Public Library System: a public library, in operation before August 26, 1994 and continued under section 60 of the *Library Act*, that is a regional district service managed by the regional board for participating municipalities and electoral areas in: (1) the Cariboo Regional District and (2) the Thomson-Nicola Regional District.

Municipal Library: a public library, established under Part 2 of the *Library Act*, that is managed by a library board incorporated under that Part and that must be financed from the municipality's annual budget and whose members are appointed by the municipal council.

Public Library Association: a public library, incorporated before August 26, 1994 as a public library association and continued under Part 4 of the *Library Act*, that is managed by a library board responsible for raising funds to support the public library association and whose members are elected by the members of the public library association.

Regional Library District: a public library, established under Part 3 of the *Library Act*, that is managed by a library board incorporated under that Part and that has the authority to apportion and charge the cost of regional library service to its constituent municipalities and regional districts and whose members are appointed by their respective councils and regional boards.